

A LETTER  
TO THE  
HON. & REV. BAPTIST NOEL, M.A.;  
CONTAINING REMARKS  
ON HIS RECENT SECESSION;  
AND PROPOSING CERTAIN MEASURES  
FOR THE  
IMMEDIATE AND ENTIRE REFORMATION  
OF THE  
CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

BY THE  
REV. THOMAS SPENCER, M.A.,  
LATE FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

“Believest thou? then thou wilt speak with boldness. Speakest thou boldly?  
then thou must suffer. Sufferest thou? then thou shalt be comforted: for  
faith, the confession of it, and the cross, do succeed one to the other.”

*Martin Luther.*

“Oh for an hour of Luther now!  
Oh for a frown of Calvin's brow!  
Once they broke the Papal chain—  
Who shall break it now again?”

*Baptist Noel.*

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**FIFTH THOUSAND.**

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# A LETTER TO THE HON. AND REV. BAPTIST NOEL, M.A.

DEAR SIR

Your recent secession from the Established Church demands the serious consideration of all those of your clerical brethren who, in common with yourself, desire the reform of that Church; and it will not, I trust, be deemed presumptuous in me, if, as one of that number, I express my opinions respecting it. The name of BAPTIST NOEL has been too long identified with all that is earnest and beloved in the Church of England to require from me an assurance that in doing so I shall be actuated only by sentiments of most sincere esteem. I shall make a few observations, *as to your power to leave the Church of England if you would;—as to the propriety of your leaving it if you could;—and as to the duties arising out of your present position.*

I. AS TO YOUR POWER TO LEAVE THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IF YOU WOULD.—The world regards you as having separated yourself from the Established Church. This you have not done, and cannot do. You have given up St. John's Chapel, and have published an "Essay on the Union of Church and State;" but this is all you have done. The opinions set forth in your Essay are such as for many years you have been supposed to hold; and which you had a right to hold in that institution which, whilst enjoining conformity to its usages, does not fetter the mind of its ministers, but requires them "by daily reading and weighing the scriptures, to wax riper and stronger in their ministry." In this study of scripture you have advanced beyond most of your brethren, and are consequently better qualified to say what a church ought to be; but you have acquired no power thereby to change your position, except by obtaining a change in the law. You are still as much a clergyman as ever, and subject to the discipline of the Bishop of the diocese in which you reside. The Bishop has promised "diligently to exercise the discipline committed to him;" and if he perform his duty, he will not permit you to preach as a noneconformist minister. You have made solemn promises which are binding, unless you can show the performance to be either unlawful or impossible. Your continuing to discharge your clerical duties until recently, and your willingness to continue them till next July, sufficiently shew that you do not regard the performance of your promises as either impossible or unlawful. At your ordination, the Bishop put to you the following question:—"Will you reverently obey your Ordinary, and other chief ministers, unto whom is committed the charge and government over you; following with glad

mind and will their godly admonitions, and submitting yourselves to their godly judgments?" And you, at the age of 24, having counted the cost, deliberately answered, "I will so do, the Lord being my helper." From this obligation, nothing but a change in the law under which you incurred it can release you. Four years ago I assured Mr. Shore, in his own house at Totnes, that he could not become a dissenting minister. He had then received legal advice to the contrary; but he has since been convinced, by painful experience, of the indelible nature of holy orders, as the law at present stands; and is now taking the proper course of petitioning the legislature to release him from the cruel tyranny which will neither permit him to preach in the Establishment nor out of it.

II. AS TO THE PROPRIETY OF YOUR LEAVING THE CHURCH IF YOU COULD.—The remarks I am about to make, are not intended to imply any disrespect to those persons who are already moving in a separate sphere. I believe that amongst the dissenting ministers and their congregations may be found some of the best men of our day; and that in the congregational system, including Independents and Baptists, a greater amount of liberty is enjoyed, both by ministers and people, than in any other system. In fact, the episcopal churches of the United States more nearly resemble the congregational, than our own. They have no parishes; each congregation elects and supports its own rector, and gives him leave of absence; and, as the bishop derives neither wealth nor lordly titles from his office, but is obliged to earn an honourable living, by taking charge of a church and congregation, this useful occupation keeps him from officious interference with his clerical brethren.

As to the ends to be accomplished in our Church we agree; it is only as to the means that we differ. I believe that the clergy ought to be elected, and voluntarily supported by their own congregations; that it is a national sin to compel some men to pay for the worship of other men; that all ecclesiastical property belongs to the people, and ought to be appropriated to the public service, due regard being had to existing incumbents and patrons; that the Bible should be the only rule of faith; that religion most declines when creeds and confessions most abound; that the Act of Uniformity is the chief cause of schism; and that endowments first corrupt the faith, and then by sordid inducements continue to present to the eyes of men the form of godliness, after the power of it has departed. The question, however, still remains—Ought we to leave the Church in which this great work is to be performed, and allow our attention to be engrossed by the building up, and keeping in repair some rival institution? or ought we to remain in the Church, and devote all that time and energy to the restoration of Apostolic simplicity? In my opinion, the latter is the proper course. The departure of good men only tends to confirm the abuses which by their united efforts they might have removed. Luther was willing to defend

his theses before the whole world ; he was ready to appear before the Pope ; he was willing to reason with the princes of Germany ; and to preach against Indulgences, and other corrupt practices of the Church of Rome, but he would not leave the Church. These are his words :—"The worse things are going, the more should we hold close to it ; for it is not by separation from it that we can make it better. For love can do all things, and nothing is difficult for those who are united." Bishops Gardiner and Bonner were aware of the importance of getting rid of the more enlightened ministers, when, in executing the order of Queen Mary, to pull down the Reformation, they dismissed three bishops for preaching, and four for being married, and without compensation, out of 16,000 clergy, turned out 12,000 for having wives. Charles II. too, who was secretly a Papist, sent away 2000 of the best of the clergy, and left them to contend with hunger and destitution. The emigration of the Pilgrim Fathers to the United States, and the desertion of many good men since that time, have permitted the Established Church to increase in power and wealth ; and never were its priests so active and successful in throwing the chains of despotism over every locality, as at this moment. Had Cromwell and his friends been permitted to leave England for America, Charles I. might have accomplished his plans of tyranny ; but as they were compelled to remain at home, their energy was exerted in behalf of the liberties of their own country. You are endeavouring to depart as Cromwell did, but the laws of the land pull you back, that as a champion of religious freedom, you may do your own proper work, in your own proper place. The shout of rejoicing set up in the Tractarian camp, should lead you to suspect the course you would pursue. The clergy think themselves safer by your departure, than by your presence. The *English Churchman* of Jan. 4, 1849, says respecting your secession : "It being notorious, that at least one half of the clergy are in the habit of disobeying some one or other plain directions of the Prayer Book, ought not all who think as he does to copy his example ? As honest men they ought to cease to minister in a Church, the doctrines of which they do not believe, and cannot consequently teach." With the articles and homilies, drawn up by Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley, to show us what those doctrines are, and with the 6th article, authorising us to abide by the scripture in all cases of doubt, are we prepared to hand over to these men all the pulpits of the Church of England ?

The proper place to resist evil is at its source. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you ;" but if you flee from him you will in vain endeavour to destroy his works. Secession stereotypes errors both in Church and State. When DISSENT is substituted for CHURCH REFORM, ecclesiastical abuses are rendered permanent. When CHARITY is substituted for JUSTICE, political grievances are confirmed. Corn Laws, and enormous taxation, would not have been endured one year but for the bribe of poor-rates and charitable

institutions. The **POOR MAN'S FRIEND**, the advocate of all kinds of relief, sometimes acts from ignorance, but he will usually be found to be identified with existing abuses. He and his class would not extend the suffrage, or encourage independence of spirit amongst the masses; all they desire is to keep them quiet. For this end, out of the income they receive under the present system of oppression, they are willing to return a few shillings in the pound, in order that they may quietly retain the remainder. The civil and ecclesiastical evils by which men are now grievously oppressed are caused by unjust legislation; and it is only by withstanding unjust legislation that they can be removed. Instead, however, of combined efforts to render the National Church a useful and self-supporting institution, men secede and form voluntary institutions to coexist with it, side by side, and in peace; and they even allow themselves to be taxed for the support of the worship they have forsaken. At a time when semi-popish priests, for the sake of protestant pay, have got possession of half our parish churches, it can scarcely be right for Protestants to surrender these edifices without a struggle. As Englishmen, they are responsible for national sins; as citizens and taxpayers, they are shareholders in national property; as parishioners and ratepayers, they are trustees to whom Providence has committed the churches and church property which their fathers, at much cost of blood and treasure, had secured for the preaching of the true faith. By quiet submission to this usurpation of their own edifices, and by erecting dissenting chapels, they have incurred the censure which their Divine Master pronounced against the church of Thyatira—"I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants."

To demand reform, however, is far more difficult than to secede. It requires men made of sterner stuff. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force;" and it is by brave men of this stamp that reforms are to be achieved. The rest are mere creatures of formality and conventionalism; and their religious profession is a mesmeric slumber, in which they fancy themselves walking towards the kingdom of heaven, the gates of which the timid, the effeminate, the fearful, and the unbelieving are not permitted to enter. Both in Church and State, the palace of the oppressor is defended by strong men, armed with vested interests; who, in order to keep their goods in peace, contrive by spurious charity to call off the attention of the destitute from the real cause of their destitution. If, for instance, men complain that they are impoverished by taxes on the necessaries of life, the modern philanthropist provides refuges for the destitute, soup kitchens, ragged schools, female penitentiaries, and lying-in hospitals. Tell him that intemperance is the main cause of pauperism and crime, and that a perpetual stream of rags, and theft, and madness flows from the gin palace and the beer

shop; and, instead of attempting to prevent the evil, by practising and recommending entire abstinence from intoxicating drinks, he discusses with paupers and thieves the question of emigration as an outlet for the paupers and thieves so created. Tell him that the window-tax diminishes light, and air, and health, and domestic comfort, and he will obtain a Public Health Bill, greatly abridging the liberties of the people; and, by thousands of paid officials, and by arbitrary enactments, adding to public expense. If you call his attention to an English newspaper of the price of fivepence, and contrast it with an American paper, of equal value to working men, but of the price of a halfpenny, and shew that the tax on paper, the penny stamp on newspapers, and the high duty upon advertisements effectually exclude useful knowledge from the millions, and leave them exposed to dangerous errors; he runs to the legislature for increased grants for the education of the poor, and asks for more clergymen, more schoolmasters, and more inspectors. If you reply that we have already universities and public schools rolling in wealth, and abounding with most valuable libraries, and with endowments sufficient to educate all England, and that these universities and public schools are a monopoly in the hands of the very parties who are expressly excluded by their statutes; instead of a movement for reform of public schools and colleges, he betakes himself to the erection of new schools and colleges, and to the obtaining of additional endowments. In all these schemes the mistaken but well-meaning philanthropist is backed by the thousands who are seeking public offices with liberal salaries out of the taxes.

Thus, when, by deviation from a right course of life, the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, the dishonest physician is prescribing pills and mixtures, stimulants and cordials, opiates and narcotics; although he knows that nothing short of a return to air and exercise, simple diet, and the laws of physical well-being can restore the patient to health. The means now in use may postpone the evil day, but it will be the more terrible when it comes; and nothing but an entire reform of Church and State can save the country from the fearful convulsion to which we are rapidly tending. Men may forsake the post of duty when it becomes the post of danger, and they may deceive themselves; but God is not mocked; and he will hold every man to his accountability as a steward. The Queen may devolve her responsibility upon her ministers, and commit her conscience to their keeping; the ministers may declare themselves powerless without a parliamentary majority; members of parliament may plead their inability to stem the torrent of abuses unless aided by strong expression of public opinion; and, to get up a public opinion, some must sow the seed of right principles in the public mind, and others must gather up the harvest of petitions springing therefrom; but when this CHIEF DUTY is to be performed, all with one consent begin to make excuse. One is too good to meddle with politics; another is not

good enough to undertake so great a work. Great minds are busy scanning the heavens; and pious minds are watching the evangelization of the heathen; advocates of liberty are getting freedom for the slaves of Brazil; men of wealth are afraid of agitation; and men of business fear their employers and customers; and thus the post of duty, the post of danger, on which the eyes of all heaven are fixed, remains deserted. Jezabel, with her painted face, looks out at her window, but when the advocate of Church Reform has exclaimed—"Who is on my side? Who?" There have been none to respond; and they that should obey the call to "throw her down" are absent.

Of all the clergy, you are amongst the most clear of the guilt of ecclesiastical evils. But, with great deference, I would ask whether you are quite exempt from blame. When speaking of the Church of England you say—"Of its 16,000 ministers, about 1,568 do nothing; about 6,681 limit their thoughts to small parishes which contain from 150 to 300 souls; while others in cities and towns profess to take charge of 8000 or 9000 souls; and of the 12,923 working pastors of churches, I fear, from various concurrent symptoms, that about 10,000 are unconverted men, who neither preach nor know the Gospel." The Church of England is a vineyard in a very fruitful hill, and much has been done for it; but it appears from this statement that it has brought forth wild grapes. The time may be near when the owner of the vineyard will say—"I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down; and I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor digged. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." But before the owner of the vineyard sanctions the work of destruction from *without*, he asks—"What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done *in* it?" We have also the prophet's explanation of the good and the wild grapes; "He looked for JUDGMENT, but behold OPPRESSION; for RIGHTEOUSNESS, but behold a CRY." Instead of a righteous government and a happy people, God saw the cruelty of the oppressors, and heard the cry of the oppressed. You have been sent to work in this vineyard. You saw the oppressors and the oppressed. Before leaving the vineyard, did you ask yourself, "What can be done more to this vineyard that I have not done *in* it?" Let us see. You had an attached and influential congregation ready, as subsequent events show, to co-operate with you in the work of Church Reform. You had relatives amongst the aristocracy, and friends in both houses of parliament, who would have presented any petition you and your congregation might have prepared. You were one of the chaplains to the Queen, and could have communicated your advice to the Head of the Church. You had the esteem of thousands of your countrymen, and the whole nation would have listened to a solemn protest from you against aristocratic oppressors, and to an appeal in behalf of the oppressed. And, finally, you might have given to the

Bishop of London your firm but respectful protest against the pomp of prelacy, and other manifest departures from apostolic simplicity; and if, in return for your fidelity, his Lordship should have withdrawn your licence, and if no other bishop would have allowed you to preach, then you would but have been in the position of Luther, who refused to leave the Church, but was excommunicated by the Pope. You would have placed yourself under the immediate protection of the Divine Being, and the hearts of millions would have sympathised with you. Many talents have been entrusted to your care; and, until you had brought them all into use, I cannot see *the propriety of your leaving the Church if you could.*

III. AS TO THE DUTIES ARISING OUT OF YOUR PRESENT POSITION.—The reformers wished to make the first reformation complete, but not being permitted, they left posterity to finish their work. In his important history, recently published, Mr. Macaulay says, "The government and the protestants had only one thing in common, hatred of the papal power. The English reformers were eager to go as far as their brethren on the continent. Thus Bishop Hooper, who died manfully at Gloucester for his religion, long refused to wear the episcopal vestments. Bishop Ridley, a martyr of still greater renown, pulled down the ancient altars of his diocese, and ordered the eucharist to be administered in the middle of the churches, at tables which the papists irreverently termed oyster boards. Bishop Jewel pronounced the clerical garb to be a stage dress, a fool's coat, a relique of the Amorites, and promised that he would spare no labour to extirpate such degrading absurdities. Archbishop Grindal long hesitated about accepting a mitre from dislike of what he regarded as the mummery of consecration." Believing that he is the true son of the Church who carries on the work of the reformers, I suggested, whilst holding the living of Hinton, various measures of Church Reform; and the tract, which I sent you seven years ago, entitled "The Second Reformation," expresses the sentiments which, more than a year after I have resigned that benefice, I still entertain. You promised at your ordination, that you would "banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's word." You regard the doctrine as erroneous that the State is bound to provide religious instruction for the people; and you consider it to be contrary to God's word that governments, composed of men of every creed, or of no creed, should be permitted to determine what is true religion, and to compel the whole nation to pay for its support. It is your mission, therefore, to banish and drive away these errors; and for this end, to bring public opinion to bear upon the legislature. For deciding all grave questions, the simple mode which it has pleased God to appoint, is that men shall reason together and persuade each other, and that they who possess some valuable truth shall proclaim the same to all who are willing to listen.



There are, however, men who hate the light, because their deeds are evil; and, if possible, they will keep others from the light. If, in conformity with the religion which God hath chosen, you begin "to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke," you will disturb thousands of oppressors who are feasting on the spoils of the oppressed. They will raise a clamour, and will complain as if you were the oppressor and they the oppressed. If you oppose war, slavery, intemperance, or heavy taxation, you excite the enmity of those who live by war, who hold slaves, who traffic in strong drink, or who live on the taxes. If you come forth, as Dr. Cumming says the Scotch Reformers did, but as the English did not, to destroy the rookeries, be prepared for the most discordant sounds. Every step in that direction will be called *political agitation*; because, ever since the time of the brave puritans, religious men have been terrified from their duty by this accusation. I allude to this because, perhaps without intending it, you have given some sanction to the delusion. At the banquet recently held at Manchester, the letter of the venerable Dr. Pye Smith expressed regret that he could not be present; but in your letter, whilst rejoicing in the success of the League, you conveyed an opinion that ministers of religion were not generally in their place at *political* meetings. Yet this was no party strife, but a great moral struggle for cheap bread. When Christ employed his Apostles in carrying bread and fish to the hungry thousands, and then commanded them to "gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost," he taught them and their successors to use all lawful means to make food plentiful, and to prevent all waste of the Divine bounty. The Corn-Laws made food scarce and dear, and sometimes, by their high duties, caused ship loads of wheat to be thrown into the Thames. Is the office of a minister of religion too sacred to allow him to assist his fellow men in repealing such laws?

The political agitators are the men who, for selfish purposes, make and support bad laws, and not the men who endeavour to repeal them. When Ahab said to Elijah, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" the prophet answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house." And when Isaiah heard the cry of the oppressed, he charged their oppressors with rebellion; he said, "Thy princes are rebellious and companions of thieves; every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards." When, in their love of show, the inhabitants of a well-ordered republic, whose payments to Church and State were small and voluntary, desired a king to rule over them, the prophet Samuel, at God's command, gave to them and through them to mankind, a political address upon the tendency of kings to take the people's property and bestow it upon their captains and horsemen, and upon their cooks, confectioners, and servants. If the people had been duly admonished to be on their guard against this tendency, the Financial Reform Association would not

now he required. The political agitators, therefore, are the clergy, who, for political purposes, and for the support of a political Church, have shunned to declare all the counsel of God. When, however, some modern Tertullus says, that you are "a pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition, and a ringleader of a sect," be sure your efforts are beginning to do execution. Touch the wealth of the Church, and they who suppose gain to be godliness will cry, "The Church is in danger." An orator at the Council of Basle said, "Formerly I was of opinion that it would be well to separate the temporal from the spiritual power, but I have learned that VIRTUE WITHOUT FORCE IS LUDICROUS, and that the Pope, without the hereditary possessions of the Church, is only the servant of kings." John Wesley, however, accomplished his great works without either power or wealth, and in opposition to both; and so little did Luther regard riches as essential to success, that he said, "He who seeks a comfortable life should not be a teacher of religion. He who seeks riches, honour, and good days, is not suited to the service of truth." So far from thinking that virtue without force is ludicrous, Luther said, "If the choice were given me, I should prefer the labour of a Christian peasant, or servant, or housemaid, to all the great conquests of an Alexander or a Julius Cæsar." Yet, rather than part with its filthy lucre, the Protestant Church of Ireland will let popery be endowed; and rather than see the wealth of the English Church endangered by the spread of popular liberty on the continent, the parties who have hitherto cried "no popery," and "down with the Pope," will urge the government to assist in restoring to the Pope that temporal throne of which his own subjects have deprived him.

The Church can only be reformed through the legislature; and in your Essay you have well described the duties of legislators. You say, "They should abolish all class legislation, create no unjust monopolies, remove all artificial checks upon industry, make all the subjects equal in the eye of the law, admit as many as possible to the privileges of the constitution. They no less owe it to their Lord and Redeemer to leave his churches free from all secular control, to intrude no ministers upon them, to impose no tax upon the reluctant for the purposes of religion, and to use no coercion whatever in religious matters." But will a parliament, as at present constituted, listen to your gentle admonitions? The majority of members in both houses receive vast incomes from the army and navy, possess enormous ecclesiastical patronage, and are deeply interested in all the abuses of Church and State. The working classes, on the contrary, when not corrupted by the bribery of parish pay and charitable gifts, have no interest in abuses; and, therefore, though less educated, they form a more correct opinion; and, if allowed to vote at elections, would send to parliament better men. When unbiassed by their priests and rulers, the common people heard Christ gladly, and would have elected him their king. In France,

Prussia, Austria, and Italy, where the people have had no share in the management of their own affairs, there is little true religion ; and, in their recent struggles for reform, they fought because they could not vote. In the free States of America, where the suffrage is universal, the people prosper, churches abound, and religion flourishes ; and when the people desire reforms they vote, but do not fight. In the other States, where men of colour have no votes, slavery exists, churches are scarce, religion languishes, and endless precautions are adopted to keep down insurrection. In England, where only one man in seven possesses the franchise, crime and infidelity increase, and poverty and discontent prevail to a dangerous extent. Assist the people to obtain universal suffrage, and you will have an enlightened House of Commons that will reform the Church. Moses chose rather to cast in his lot with his brethren in their affliction, than to enjoy the pleasures of Pharaoh's court ; but before he was allowed to teach the divine law unto the people, he was required to deliver them from bondage ;—" Let my people go, that they may serve me." And, assuredly, that which is necessary for the accomplishment of a religious object, is itself religious. Till this is done, hungry men who ascribe their poverty to the laws made by the class to which the preacher belongs, are not likely to seek the law at his mouth. " True it is," says the judicious Hooker, " that the kingdom of God must be the first thing in our purposes and desires. But inasmuch as righteous life presupposeth life, inasmuch as to live virtuously it is impossible unless we live, therefore the first impediment which naturally we endeavour to remove is penury and want of things without which we cannot live."

But the people are said to be too ignorant to vote. The true version of this is that they are too wise ; they would remove abuses and cut down expenditure. When the Prior of Blackfriars preached before the University of Cambridge against the dangerous tendency of the opinions of Bishop Latimer, and especially with regard to a translation of the scriptures for the use of the common people, he said, " If that heresy were to prevail, we should soon see an end of everything useful among us. The ploughman, reading that if he put his hand to the plough, and should happen to look back, he was unfit for the kingdom of God, would soon lay aside his labour ; the simple man, also finding himself commanded to pluck out his eyes, in a few years we should have the nation full of blind beggars." On the following Sunday, Latimer replied in the same pulpit ; and, fixing his eyes on the bench on which sat the Prior with his cowl about his shoulders, he said, " A figurative manner of speech is common in all languages, and generally understood ; thus, for instance, when we see a fox painted preaching in a friar's hood, nobody imagines that a fox is meant, but that craft and hypocrisy are described which are so often found in that garb." The only danger the friar had foreseen was that the people, by reading the scriptures, would become too

wise to submit any longer to priestly power. The late venerable W. Howels, minister of Long Acre Episcopal chapel, with Latimer's penetration, appeared to see into the character of a prelate since distinguished for his support of surplices, sisters of mercy, and baptismal regeneration. About 18 years ago, a few days after the appointment of Dr. Phillpotts to the diocese of Exeter, in explaining to his congregation the passage—"O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the desert," I heard him say, "In former times, prophets and priests were noted for the vulpine quality of cunning;—it is not less so now; a fox has lately been made a bishop." The magicians of Egypt imitated Moses, not to assist, but to thwart his object; and religious ordinances and educational efforts, under tractarian auspices, whilst pretending to remove popular ignorance and spiritual destitution, are, in reality, the enchantments contrived to impede the progress of sound learning and true religion.

Trusting, therefore, that your faith in right principles, and your confidence in an overruling Providence will make you heartily willing to grant to the people political power, and that you will not permit any kind of opposition to deter you from the work of Church Reform, I proceed to suggest a few practical measures which are calculated to accomplish that object.

1. *A Letter to Christian Churches*.—Issue an address to protestants of all denominations, urging them to lay aside sectarian differences, and to come forth as joint proprietors of all national property, responsible for its right appropriation, and for the righteous use of parish churches and cathedrals. Convince them that whilst they inveigh against the Babylonish connection of Church and State, they are the landlords of the premises in which this intercourse is carried on. Exhort every minister of religion to set apart a day for calling the attention of his congregation to the abuses of the National Church, and for inviting their earnest co-operation, as citizens, in a simultaneous effort to bring about the SECOND REFORMATION.

2. *A Provisional Committee*.—Gather around you a select band of faithful men, living in or near London, to prepare a broad basis on which all honest protestants may cordially act together. Such as, that the Bible only shall be the guide of all proceedings, the public good the end to be aimed at; that church property be appropriated to national uses; that ministers be elected and supported by their own congregations. Into this committee admit no timid or time-serving character; rather have open enemies than such false brethren; for, whilst ever ready to thrust themselves amongst the leaders of every great movement, they are traitors in the camp—will give cowardly counsels—cause unreasonable fears, and turn their back when real work is to be done.

3. *A General Council*.—Let the provisional committee invite all ministers and office-bearers of protestant congregations, and all earnest Christians who heartily concur in these objects, to meet in

conference to devise the best means of accomplishing them; to make arrangements for future action; to forward petitions to the Queen and both Houses of Parliament; and to prepare an address to all Christians throughout the empire.

4. *A Church Reformation Society*.—Let the GENERAL COUNCIL organise a Church Reformation Society; or, in preference to a new association, let arrangements be made with institutions already in existence, whose objects are to obtain religious liberty, and the separation of the Church from the State. Let an appeal be made to all such societies, reminding them of their common interest in the Church of England as a national establishment, and of their duty to promote its immediate and entire reformation.

5. *A Church Reform Gazette*.—Let there be established a CHURCH REFORM GAZETTE, AND ADVOCATE OF CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY. Let arrangements be made with some journal already engaged in preparing the people for “the good time coming,” the proprietors of which may be willing to take this new title. In addition to the most important news of the day, and to the special object of the Second Reformation, let its columns be open to all movements connected with peace, temperance, self-support, and the extension of the suffrage. As an organ of Christian principles, let it be conducted without partiality, and without hypocrisy; demanding justice to all, and defending the rights of all; and especially let it seek the removal of that most ingenious substitute for slavery, INDIRECT TAXATION; by which the hire of the labourer is kept back by fraud; by which nearly ten shillings out of every pound are taken from his earnings by means of taxes placed on tea, coffee, sugar, &c., whilst from the rich it takes only one shilling in the pound; by which those who live on the taxes are enabled to extract more profit from the wages of the labourer, than the slave owner can extract from the labour of his slave; and which thus renders England the most lightly taxed country in the world for the wealthy, whilst it causes men of business and toil to sink under their heavy burdens.

6. *Lectures, Tracts, and Petitions*.—Let the society make arrangements for the delivering of lectures on Church Reform; for the circulation of tracts bearing upon the subject; for the convening of public meetings; and for the obtaining of signatures to petitions.

7. *A Day of Solemn Prayer*.—Since the efforts of man are vain unless prospered by the Great Disposer of events, let all congregations throughout the kingdom, favourable to this great object, be invited to set apart a day for solemn prayer to Almighty God that he would grant success to our united efforts.

I place prayer at the end, not as implying that in the beginning and continuance of these means it should not be adopted by those who worship God in spirit and in truth, for, at all times, the Father seeketh such to worship him, that he may give them wisdom to direct, the will to act, and the power to execute; but to check the too

common habit of asking God to send upon us peace and prosperity, and all things needful for us, whilst taking no steps to procure the same. There is not in the Bible an instance of God's doing for man that which man could do for himself. The ravens brought to Elijah bread and flesh, but not water, because he could drink at the brook; and it was not till the brook dried up that the widow's barrel of meal and cruse of oil were made to furnish an inexhaustible supply. When by his divine power our Lord would raise Lazarus from the dead, he said, "Take ye away the stone;" teaching us that before God will work man must remove the impediments which he himself has placed in the way, and which he himself is able to remove; and when human strength could do no more, he cried, "Lazarus, come forth." But even then there was to be no excuse for idleness; for when Lazarus came forth bound hand and foot with grave clothes, they were commanded to "Loose him and let him go." When Peter was to be set free by an angel, the light shined in the prison, his chains fell off, the iron gate opened of its own accord, but he was required to gird on his own sandals, to cast his own garment about him, to follow his guide, and when in the open street, where a guide was no longer wanted, he was left to decide upon his own movements. This is daily seen also in the natural world. If we would obtain food out of a marshy field, it is not enough to offer a prayer for daily bread; we must cut drains to carry off the moisture; we must plough the ground; we must pulverise the soil, and then sow the seed; and God causes his sun to shine, and his rain to descend, and the grain to vegetate. But even when the harvest is ripe, man must put in the sickle, thrash the corn, grind it into flour, bake it into bread, and eat it; and by these means God strengthens man's heart, and fills it with food and gladness; but without the use of means the prayer for daily bread is a mockery, and the reliance on supernatural aid a sin. So shall we find that without using some such efforts as those above described we shall in vain look for success; but that whilst we spare no pains or self denial, and whilst we are willing to make any sacrifice on our own part, a day of solemn prayer to Almighty God will be a high day. Then, in guiding the counsels of statesmen, God will work, and our strength for a time may be to sit still. The waters which separate the land of bondage from the land of liberty will divide and make a way for us to pass through. It is recorded of Cranmer, that in a sermon at Canterbury, he declared that "he had for many years *prayed* for the destruction of the usurped jurisdiction of the Pope, because it was the occasion of many things being done contrary to the honour of God and the good of this realm; and he perceived no hopes of amendment whilst it continued." But it was not until he had attacked the Pope's supremacy in parliament that he was permitted to see the fulfilment of his prayer; nor until

it could be recorded of him that, "the Archbishop answered all the arguments brought in defence of papal tyranny with such strength and perspicuity, and so solidly confuted its advocates from the word of God, and the universal consent of the primitive church, that the foreign power was abolished by full consent of parliament and convocation."

By means such as these the Reform Bill was carried, slavery was abolished, the penny postage obtained, and the Corn Laws repealed. By means such as these wars shall cease, the taxes on industry and knowledge be taken off, and religion shall be set free. The great reforms of our day were no more brought about by governments than the invention of gas, the steam boat, the railway, or the electric telegraph. All that governments can do is to give full scope to the energies of a mighty people. In one of these works you took an honourable part. Before the Anti-Corn-Law movement was popular, you stepped into the midst, and, by your well-timed "Plea for the Poor," contributed materially to its success. Sir Robert Peel ascribed the abolition of the Corn Laws to Mr. Cobden; and Mr. Cobden has more than once dated his success from the time when the conference of 650 ministers of religion placed the food monopoly before the world as a question of justice and merey. The Bible was opened, and its voice went forth—"He that withholdeth corn the people shall curse him," and trade was set free. Let the Bible be again opened, and the doom of ecclesiastical monopoly shall be pronounced, and religion shall be free.

Then will the church no longer be identified with tithe proctors and tax gatherers, with gaols and ecclesiastical courts, but with congregations of faithful men saying to the passer by—"Come thou with us and we will do thee good." The plain mechanic will no longer be repelled by prelatie pomp and priestly arrogance, but will gladly accept the easy yoke and light burden of the meek and lowly teacher. Instead of a kingdom that cometh by observation of numbers of churches, clergy, and incomes of benefices, the progress of religion will be estimated by the numbers engaged in self support, in self culture, in judging of their own selves what is right, in taking heed what they hear, and how they hear, and in bringing forth individual good works. Instead of committing the exercise of benevolence to dry machinery, each will follow the advice of St. Chrysostom—"Knowest thou not that God enacteth not almsgiving so much for the sake of the poor, as for the sake of the persons themselves who bestow? *Give not thine alms to those who preside in the church to distribute.* Bestow it *thyself* that thou mayest have the reward, not of giving merely, but of kind service. Give with thine own hands. Be thou a dispenser of thine own gifts. Thine own benevolence, and the fear of God appoint thee to that ministry." Each will be a light set in a candlestick; each a little leaven leavening the surrounding lump; each visiting the fatherless and


widow, considering the poor and needy, relieving judiciously, and striving to remove the causes of poverty and affliction. Congregations of such men will cover the land; and the bystanders, who had refused to be driven, and who would not follow the hireling, will come when they hear the voice of the true shepherd. They will no longer suspect the gospel to be a fable cunningly devised to keep them quiet by the promise of the life that is to come, whilst it deprived them of the enjoyment of the life that now is. Each congregation would have its self-supporting institutions for the promotion of education, of temperance, of useful knowledge, and for providing for a time of sickness and old age. Those mockeries, compulsory religion and compulsory charity, would disappear. Poor-rates and church-rates would cease. Instead of party strife and sectarian animosity, men would provoke each other to love and good works. Instead of confining their thoughts to types and shadows past, or to the events of future ages, they would study the signs of the present times, and the duties of the present day; and whatsoever things are true, honest, just, lovely, or of good report, they would think on these things, and thus would shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.

That you may be so richly endued with the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind, as to be the instrument of bringing about so great a change, is the sincere desire of,

Your obedient servant,

THOMAS SPENCER.

*Bath, March 5, 1849.*

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